District School Accountability Report

District Name:	Coquitlam
District Number:	#43
Superintendent:	Laureen Doerksen
Date of Visit:	March 24 – 27, 2003
Team Chair:	Mike McKay, Superintendent of Schools, SD 63 (Saanich)
Team Members:	Kelly Burt, Modern Languages Coordinator, SD 37 (Delta) Irene Corman, Director of Education, SD 61 (Greater Victoria) Terry Dale, Teacher, SD 73 (Kamloops/Thompson) Kelly Dong, Finance Coordinator, Ministry of Education Holly Egan, Parent Representative, SD 37 (Delta) Bob Gardner, Principal, SD 22 (Vernon) Tom Hierck, Principal, SD 8 (Kootenay Lake) Susan Reid, Vice-Principal, SD 63 (Saanich) Heather Walker, Director of Field Liaison, Ministry of Education

Context

The purpose of the District Review is to provide feedback and recommendations to the District, the Ministry of Education and the public regarding the District's work in improving student achievement by:

- Reviewing district and school achievement data;
- Reviewing the District's Accountability Contract (known in School District #43 as the Performance Plan) and School Plans to improve student achievement;
- Making recommendations to the Board and to the Minister about improving student achievement; and
- Identifying promising practices that will assist other districts and schools in their efforts to improve student achievement.

School District #43, Coquitlam, is one of twenty districts participating in the District Review process during the 2002-03 school year.

Coquitlam is a school district with a commitment to establishing the conditions to support student achievement through intentional planning and coordinated effort. Decisions about system reconfiguration, school organization, staff assignments, and district and school goals have been based on thoughtful, long-range planning and strong education research.

After many years of substantial population growth, Coquitlam has recently experienced an enrolment decline, which has led to the closure of some of the District's smaller schools.

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This is a school district that values diversity while providing strong district direction and support. The district planning process involves all partner groups in extensive consultation. Even though there has been a significant reduction in resources, staff development is effective and ongoing.

Summary of Process

On the first morning of the Review, the Superintendent, four Zone Superintendents, and two District Principals presented an overview of the district that included complete and detailed information about district goals, the process for goal development and the history of strategic planning within the district.

Members of the team also met with the Board of School Trustees, the Presidents' Council, made up of the Presidents of the Coquitlam Teachers' Association, the CUPE local, the Administrators' Association and the District Parent Advisory Council.

During the remainder of the visit, members of the District Review Team met with 30 of the District's 73 schools for approximately 2½ hours each. At each of the schools, the team members met with representatives of the School Planning Councils (SPC), Parent Advisory Councils (PAC), administrators, and teachers. Some visits included CUPE representatives and students.

Additional data:

In addition to the District's Performance Plan and the 30 School Improvement Plans for those schools visited, the District Review Team considered the District Key Information Binder which provides data and trends in key areas, the Ministry "School Performance Report", the Satisfaction Survey Report, the District's FSA Analysis Report, the "Supporting Diversity Through Unity" Report and the District Provincial Exam and Scholarship Results Report.

Acknowledgements

The District Review Team members appreciated the open, enthusiastic and professional approach they encountered throughout the district. District and school personnel, parents and students were all well prepared to discuss the School and/or District Plan and work toward the stated goals. There was obvious pride in the progress being achieved and attention to the challenges to be met in order to support success for all students. The Team wishes to thank the School District #43 learning community for its time, its gracious hospitality, and commends the community on its clear passion and commitment to the students in the district.

Observations in Key Areas - Focus on Student Achievement

Following is a graphic representation of the Team's assessment of School District #43 in the 10 Key Areas of Inquiry. This representation uses 3 levels and the overlaps between levels.

1. *Goals:*
   Improving districts have a strong instructional focus. This focus is made visible in clear goals for improving student learning.

Not Yet....	Approaching Expectations	Meeting Expectations
Goals have little focus on student learning, they are more focused on providing opportunities.	Goals are more related to adult behaviour than to student learning.	Thoughtful evidence based goals clearly linked to student learning are in place.

- The District has set clear goals based on improving student achievement.
- Most schools have set clear goals that are focused on student learning and have realistic targets based on the uniqueness of their student populations.
- There are some schools that are in the early stages of setting their goals based on evidence.

2. *Rationale:*
   Improving districts have a thorough and connected set of reasons based on evidence for the selection of their student achievement goals.

Not Yet....	Approaching Expectations	Meeting Expectations
Few data-based reasons are evident.	Only some goals are based on evidence.	Evidence of well thought out reasons based on an understanding of student achievement data and community expectations.

- A number of schools used their recent accreditation process to help them establish appropriate goals related to student achievement.
- Most schools had a thorough and connected set of reasons based on evidence for the selection of their goals.
- Some schools found an apparent discrepancy between two data sources and established a goal to seek clarification.
- In a number of schools there is a need to continue working at linking data to the development of their goals.

3. *Data:*
Improving districts are actively considering at least three sources of evidence including classroom, school and district / provincial data. The analysis of this evidence has informed the selection of the district goals.

Not Yet....	Approaching Expectations	Meeting Expectations
Not clear what data will be used to determine progress.	The evidence being used to determine progress is limited to one source.	Classroom, school, and district / provincial data sources will provide evidence of progress.

- The District and many schools consider a variety of sources of evidence, including:
  - provincial exam and FSA results;
  - school-wide performance standard assessments including student self-assessment;
  - parent, staff and student surveys;
  - report card marks; and
  - Kindergarten and Grade One screening information.
- Many schools use data in strategic and thoughtful ways, not only to inform the selection of goals, but also to inform instruction and influence promising practices to support student success. Both schools and the District consider data trends over time.
- Some schools are using fewer than 3 sources of data or are not yet using a balanced (classroom/school/district/province) variety of data.
- Some schools are at the early stages of establishing baselines for the consideration of data and of tracking cohort groups.
- School satisfaction survey data is not organized to permit thoughtful analysis by elementary, middle and secondary school levels.

4. *Strategies:*
Improving districts have a well-organized, focused improvement plan in place. The strategies selected to achieve the goals are an intelligent blend of research, best practice, and innovative thinking.

Not Yet....	Approaching Expectations	Meeting Expectations
Not clear what data will be used to determine progress.	The evidence being used to determine progress is limited to one source.	Classroom, school, and district / provincial data sources will provide evidence of progress.

- Schools are developing strategies that are:
  - extensive, innovative, research based and thoughtfully supported by the District through staff development opportunities, funding and resources; and
  - linked, in a number of schools and at the district level, with structures that support them.
- Most schools demonstrated a collaborative learning culture.

5. *Structures:*
Improving districts have aligned structures – resources, time, organization – to get the results they want. This includes effectively differentiating resources in the areas of highest need for improvement.

Not Yet....	Approaching Expectations	Meeting Expectations
Structures have not been aligned to support enhanced student learning.	Some structural changes have been initiated.	Structures, resources, time and organization are adjusted in support of district goals.

- The District takes a creative and varied approach toward shifting resources to support schools in achieving their goals. A variety of initiatives were evident.
- Schools have recognized the importance of realigning structures (human, material, and financial) to achieve the important goals they have established.
- Middle schools' timetables include scheduled planning time for teacher teams.
- Elementary schools are also developing structures to allow for teaming.

6. *Results:*
Improving districts get improved student learning results – at the classroom, school and district levels.

Not Yet....	Approaching Expectations	Meeting Expectations
Baseline data and targets are not evident.	Performance targets and trend data are being established.	There are encouraging signs of progress towards achieving performance targets for improvement.

- The District is working with schools to examine student achievement results and to develop coherent plans to support success for specific groups of students.
- The District's 3% target increase does not reflect the diversity among the schools in the district.
- Most schools are in the early stages of deciding upon and collecting baseline data from which to measure results.
- Many schools are using and tracking results with the BC Performance Standards.
- A number of schools are using the BC Performance Standards to make decisions about adjusting their teaching practice.

7. *Communication:*
Improving districts communicate and make public their improvement goals and the progress being made.

Not Yet....	Approaching Expectations	Meeting Expectations
Insufficient communication processes in place.	District communicates and makes public some improvement goals and the progress being made.	People in schools, in the district and school community have knowledge of the goals and the progress being made.

- Most schools reported using various means to communicate goals and progress. Common methods included newsletters (school, PAC, SPC), meetings (PAC, SPC, DPAC), and school websites.
- Goals and other school information are shared among schools and with the District.
- Parent representatives (PAC/SPC) were informed of school goals and progress.

8. *Partnership: District and School Coherence*
Improving districts have a dynamic and interactive strategy for connecting school and district goals. School uniqueness and school district directions are both valued.

Not Yet....	Approaching Expectations	Meeting Expectations
There is little connection. Few schools have goals related to district goals or district directs school goals unilaterally.	School goals inform the district direction OR district goals inform the school's direction.	An evolving strategy is working to thoughtfully link school and district directions.

- While the District values school uniqueness and autonomy, there is an expectation from the District that schools select at least one of their goals in alignment with the district goals.
- Schools report a high level of district support in working toward the school goals that are aligned with the District Performance Plan.
- In some schools, the requirement to include at least one district goal has shaped the school direction rather than the school goals being generated following thoughtful data analysis.

9. *Partnership: District and Parent Involvement*
Improving districts work as a team with parents, including specific groups of parents, on improving student learning.

Not Yet....	Approaching Expectations	Meeting Expectations
There is little connection. Few schools have goals related to district goals or district directs school goals unilaterally.	School goals inform the district direction OR district goals inform the school's direction.	An evolving strategy is working to thoughtfully link school and district directions.

- School Planning Councils have been established and are enthusiastic about their involvement in helping schools plan to improve student learning.
- The DPAC has member representatives on all District Advisory Committees.

10. *Leadership / Teamwork:*
Improving districts are led by district leaders with a clear vision for and commitment to school improvement and improving student achievement. Principals, vice principals, teacher, parent and student leadership is encouraged and systematically developed – with a focus on improving student learning.

Not Yet....	Approaching Expectations	Meeting Expectations
Little shared leadership is evident.	There is ample evidence of shared leadership at either the district or school level.	Shared leadership involves the entire school community and results in improved student learning. Leadership development for school planning councils is in place.

- The District has a well-established process for consultation and collaboration with education partners. Representatives from each partner group sit on each District Committee.
- A strong positive culture is present at most schools to support teamwork among teachers, among teacher leaders, and among administrators in setting school direction.
- Many schools have strong student leadership programs connected to school goals.

Strengths

The Team observed the following strengths:

- Thoughtful and consistent implementation of effective assessment and teaching practices to achieve early success for primary students.
- Demonstrated shared leadership by administrators and teacher colleagues.
- Demonstrated loyalty of parents to their schools' plans and cultures.
- Strong and ongoing support from district level staff in response to school needs.
- District support for thoughtful articulation between schools and among schools for students K to 12.
- District and school examination of cohort group data over time.
- Creative use of time and resources to enable staff development to take place within schools.
- Attention to BC Performance Standards and regular use of this resource.
- Intentional, planned initiatives that support the application of social responsibility skills in classrooms and schools.

Promising Practices

Among the many innovative, thoughtful and promising practices in School District #43 (Coquitlam) the following represent those that were seen in more than one school and could be replicated in other schools and districts.

- A district infrastructure is in place to support focused staff development related to goals, both within and among schools.
- At least three schools have developed report card formats that describe learning outcomes and student assessment using performance standards, letter grades and comments.
- Some secondary schools are beginning to break down traditional structures through the creation of interdisciplinary teams and cross-curricular use of BC Performance Standards.
- Many schools have parent education programs in place to assist parents in supporting student learning both at home and at school.
- Collaborative school curriculum planning has allowed social responsibility and academic goals to be integrated.
- The Aboriginal and Student Services Advisory Committees allow a broad representation from the community and from advocacy groups.

Recommendations

The Team recommends the following actions for strengthening the school and district focus on student achievement and for improving results:

- Engage with the schools to set student achievement goals that are measured in terms of meeting or exceeding standards as opposed to linking targets to a provincial average.
- Identify strategies that are consistently increasing student achievement for specific groups of students. Support the coherent use of these strategies across the district.
- Increase the use of BC Performance Standards at the school and district level for both goal setting and monitoring of student progress.
- Support the secondary schools to work collectively in the development of school improvement plans that engage all learners from the time they enter Grade 9 through to graduation.